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Eritrea-Yemen Conflict

OAU Chief Seeks International Help on Red Sea

EA2212153495 Addis Ababa Radio Ethiopia Network in English 1030 GMT 22 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Organization of African Unity secretary general, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, says all efforts should be exerted to defuse disputes over Hanish islands and promote a peaceful and amicable solution through dialogue and negotiation.

During his end-of-year meeting with the heads of African diplomatic missions here in Addis Ababa, the secretary general underscored the need for the organizations such as the UN, the OAU, the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Conference to work together toward a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the dispute between Eritrea and Yemen.

OAU, Arab League To Coordinate Mediation

NC2312181795 Paris AFP in English 1438 GMT 23 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, Dec 23 (AFP) — The Arab League has begun coordinating with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in a bid to solve a bloody dispute between Yemen and Eritrea over a Red Sea island, a league official said Saturday [23 December].

"This coordination began after a misunderstanding between the secretary generals (of the two organizations) had ended," an advisor to league secretary general Ahmed Benjella told the press.

League head 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid received a letter on Saturday from his OAU counterpart, Salim Ahmed Salim, in which he "expressed his desire for cooperation with the league in finding a peaceful solution" to the Yemen-Eritrea conflict, Benjella said.

Benjella did not give details on the "misunderstanding" between the pan-Arab and pan-African organizations.

But the league has come out in support of member-nation Yemen after Eritrean troops seized on Monday the strategic island of Hanish al-Kabir, at the mouth of the Red Sea, claimed by both countries.

Eritrea, an OAU member, angrily denounced the league's support as "meddling" in what it insisted was a bilateral dispute.

In his note to 'Abd-al-Majid, Salim called for the two organizations to "strengthen their cooperation to contain the tense situation in the southern Red Sea and to prevent escalation," Benjella said.

Benjella added that the league was in "continual contact with Sanaa to know the latest developments in the situation" and with the league's representative to the OAU in Addis Ababa "for coordination."

OAU Chief Stresses Peaceful Solution

NC2412192395 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1840 GMT 24 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 24 Dec (MENA) — Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid today received a message from OAU Secretary General Salim Ahmed Salim on the crisis between Yemen and Eritrea. Arab League spokesman Counselor Tal'at Hamid said that in his message OAU Secretary General Salim expressed the common interest and concern of the Arab League and the OAU to work to prevent an escalation of the situation and any repercussions from the crisis between the two countries. He stressed his concern to reach a peaceful solution to this crisis in order to safeguard relations between the two countries through dialogue and negotiations. It is to be recalled that Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid sent a message to the OAU secretary general last week and explained the Arab League stance on the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute and concern to resolve it peacefully.

Ethiopia's Mediation Brings Release of Prisoners

NC2312183795 Paris AFP in English 1739 GMT 23 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Dubai, Dec 23 (AFP) — Eritrea said Saturday [23 December] it would release 195 Yemeni soldiers taken prisoner during a battle for a disputed Red Sea island, meeting one of Yemen's conditions for the opening of talks to resolve their week-old conflict. [passage omitted]

Its conciliatory gesture came as Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyum Mesfin mediated between the two countries.

According to Sunday's edition of the independent YEMEN TIMES, Mesfin has proposed a three-point plan involving the release of Yemeni prisoners to the Red Cross, the evacuation of the Hanish archipelago by both sides and arbitration by the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

The United States was backing the plan, the daily said.

Diplomats in Sanaa said Mesfin, expected in Asmara after visiting Sanaa, would return to Yemen in the next few days to hear its response to his proposals.

Eritrea demanded Friday that both sides withdrew their troops from the Hanish archipelago of nine islands before taking their dispute to international arbitration.

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Yemen's Deputy Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Wahhab al-Anisi said Saturday his country "accepts any mediation likely to resolve the conflict peacefully," but dismissed Eritrea's demand for international arbitration as playing for time and avoiding the problem.

Hanish al-Kabir, which lies halfway between the Yemeni and Eritrean coastlines, was formerly owned by the Ottoman empire and its status has never been determined by international convention.

It is strategically important as it controls access to the Bab al-Mandab straits between the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

Yemen launched a diplomatic offensive on Saturday to win international backing in the conflict, dispatching three envoys to Gulf Arab states with messages from President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih.

Prime Minister 'Abd-al-'Aziz 'Abd-al-Ghani was sent to Saudi Arabia, where he met Saudi Defence Minister Sultan Bin-Abd-al-'Aziz.

Meanwhile, Yemeni Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani travelled to the United Arab Emirates and Oman, and al-Anisi went to Qatar and Bahrain.

Two of Salih's advisors were also to visit Egypt and Syria later Saturday, while the minister of legal affairs, 'Abdallah Ahmad Ghanimk, was expected in Jordan on Sunday.

UN Secretary General Butrus Butrus-Ghali is to visit Yemen on Friday before travelling on to Eritrea to offer to mediate personally in the conflict.

According to Arab diplomats in the Gulf, Yemen is keen to avoid another conflict after its May-July 1994 civil war, from which its economy has not yet recovered.

Envoy Denies Eritrean Incursion Into Djibouti

NC2312175895 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1720 GMT 23 DEC 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 23 Dec (MENA) — Eritrean ambassador in Djibouti 'Abdallah Adam [as transliterated] has denied reports that Eritrean forces advanced 25 kilometers inside Djibouti's territory. He also denied that he was summoned to the Djibouti Foreign Ministry and received a protest over an incursion. In a statement released and faxed to MENA today, the ambassador said that these reports are groundless. He noted that relations between Eritrea and Djibouti are founded on fraternity, good neighborliness, and common interests.

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Burundi

Minister: OAU Agrees To Extend Observer Mission

EA2212164795 Bujumbura Radio-Television Nationale du Burundi Radio in English 1130 GMT 22 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The foreign minister, Venerand Bakevyumusaya, has returned from the meeting of the OAU central organ on conflict prevention and conflict resolution which was held in Addis Ababa.

Venerand Bakevyumusaya has disclosed that the OAU accepted to extend the mission of observation which was sent to Burundi since the crisis broke out. However, the Burundi foreign minister also said that the OAU is disappointed by the slow developments in the resolution of the Burundian crisis.

[Begin recording] [Bakevyumusaya] The central organ expressed its great concern about the massacres that are still going on in the country. And they also expressed their concern about the work of the mission for observation in Burundi, because some consider that the mission has not succeeded as they were expecting. But according to the government report which appreciates the services of this mission they accepted to extend its mission for three months.

The central organ was also happy about the summit of Cairo held on the 28th and 29th of November. And they said that they support a regional conference on peace, security, stability and development in the region of the Great Lakes. And finally, the central organ asked the secretary general to continue to keep contacts in order to maintain a dialogue and consultation with all the political forces in Burundi in order to promote reconciliation in this country.

[Correspondent] Mr. minister, you said that Burundi figured prominently in the talks of the OAU. Can you tell us more about the other strategies of the OAU in the resolution of the conflict in Burundi. This is not only prevention now, it is the resolution of the crisis.

[Bakevyumusaya] First, I would tell you that they seemed to be very disappointed because they consider that they had done everything possible to help. They made many visits. The secretary general himself made many visits here. And they sent this mission for observation which spent more than one year here, almost two years. So they accepted to lengthen its mission and they accept to maintain contacts and (?allow) a lump sum of money to help this mission to be able to work properly, efficiently. [end recording]

Congo

Premier, Opposition Leader on Peace Pact

LD2412191495 Paris Radio France International in French 1730 GMT 24 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] A peace pact has been signed in Congo after a year of negotiations. The leaders of the opposition and of the parties close to the presidency have chosen Christmas day to sign a 14-point document.

Among other things, this peace plan makes provision for the reorganization of the army and the security forces. The militias of the parties that clashed with extreme violence over two years, causing the deaths of at least 2,000 people, will be integrated into the security forces.

Alain Shungu, who attended the ceremony at which the peace treaty was signed, reports from Brazzaville:

[Shungu] In the pact, the politicians pledged, among other things, to disarm all militias within 30 days as of 24 December, and to integrate them into the security forces over the same period of time. Are 30 days enough to disarm all militias? Bernard Kolelas is the leader of the opposition:

[Begin Kolelas recording] The militias should have been disarmed by now. Indeed, at the time the committee signed the document, it was said that, from then on, armed people would no longer be seen on the streets. This means that they are gangsters, they are vandals. [end recording]

[Shungu] We can hope that, thanks to the gradual return of peace in Brazzaville, those politicians who armed their supporters will keep their word this time round. Congolese Prime Minister Jacques-Joachim Yhombi-Opango:

[Begin Yhombi-Opango recording] We are convinced that it will work. A solemn commitment has been made by the political establishment of our country, and this is a major step toward peace. [end recording]

[Shungu] It should be pointed out that some militias are still operating, especially along the Congo-Ocean railway, where they attack passenger trains.

Alain Shungu, Brazzaville, RFI.

Rwanda

Central Bank Governor Seeks Asylum in Belgium

LD2312102195 Paris Radio France International in French 0730 GMT 23 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] There has been another defection by a top Rwandan official. This time it is the governor of the Central Bank, who has slammed the door, requesting political asylum in Belgium. The top civil servant has issued a condemnation of, among other things, the powerful grip on public finances exercised by the military.

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Eritrea

Isaias Reiterates Call for Island Arbitration

NC2212155395 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1520 GMT 22 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 22 Dec (MENA) — Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki has reiterated that international arbitration is the route to permanent solution of the problem between his country and the Republic of Yemen over the disputed islands. He called for sitting at the negotiating table in order to tackle the problem through calm dialogue.

In a statement distributed by the Eritrean embassy in Cairo today, the Eritrean president noted that his government is committed to handing over all the prisoners to the Red Cross in Asmara.

On evacuating the disputed al-Hanish islands, the Eritrean president said that he has agreed with Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih on solving the issue through international arbitration, adding that a mediator acceptable to both sides is needed — whether the island is evacuated or not — before an international ruling is issued.

Says Conflict Affects Whole Region

EA2212205395 Asmara Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea in Tigrinya 1600 GMT 22 Dec 95

[First part of President Isaias Afwerki's news conference on 21 December; place not given — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] [Selasea] Thank you, Mr. president. I am Yemane Wolde Selasea from Ethiopian TV. Does the Eritrean Government believe that this dispute can be solved soon? Ethiopia is making efforts to solve the problem peacefully. To my knowledge no other neighboring country has tried so far. So why is Ethiopia showing so much concern? The Ethiopian foreign minister was in Yemen and here also. Has Ethiopia made any proposal?

[Isaias] Ethiopia's concern might have its own foundations. As we have continuously stated, the problem might be between Eritrea and Yemen, but the surrounding region is very sensitive, because it is a world corridor for sea transportation, especially for fuel transportation from the Middle East to Europe and the United States. So taking into consideration the importance of the area in general, it is impossible to say that it is a bilateral problem. We have other neighbors in the Red Sea region. For example, if we want to draw our maritime boundaries, then it would be very difficult to draw those of two countries only, so Saudi Arabia and Djibuti should be involved. Therefore, you cannot say that the problem is only that of Eritrea and Yemen. Egypt can also be affected economically. As the world is becoming very small, we cannot say it is of no concern to others. [passage omitted]

Government Buries Hanish Dead; 12 Killed

EA2212210795 Asmara Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea in Tigrinya 1600 GMT 22 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The burial ceremony for the valiant heroes who died on the Hanish islands was held today at the Asmara Patriots' cemetery. President Isaias Afwerki, other high ranking government officials, and the public at large were present at the ceremony. The president and other officials laid flower wreaths.

In a speech, Defense Minister Sebhat Ephrem said we feel great sorrow and at the same time pride and honor for these 12 heroes [Eritrea previously put the death toll at six] who died for their country and who are leaving us.

Government, Red Cross Discuss Releasing POW's

EA2312151595 Asmara Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea in Tigrinya 0400 GMT 23 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] In keeping with its promise, the Eritrean Government has begun talks with the Red Cross on the release of the Yemeni POW's.

The total number of POW's is 195. Out of these, 47 are officers, including one brigadier general, three colonels, five majors, eight captains, 11 lieutenants, 19 deputy-lieutenants, and the remaining 148 are privates.

Government Plans To Release Yemeni Prisoners

NC2312160195 Paris AFP in English 1519 GMT 23 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Dubai, Dec 23 (AFP) — Eritrea said Saturday [23 December] it planned to release 195 Yemeni soldiers taken prisoner during a battle for the disputed Red Sea island of Hanish al-Kabir.

"The Eritrean Government has begun consultations with the International Committee of the Red Cross on how the Yemeni prisoners will be released," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement, issued by the Eritrean embassy here.

Yemen has demanded the release of prisoners and the withdrawal of Eritrean troops from Hanish al-Kabir ahead of any negotiations on the status of the strategic island.

Eritrea captured Hanish al-Kabir, claimed by both countries, on Monday [18 December] following a three-day battle during which nine soldiers were killed.

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Information Commissioner Rejects Yemeni Proposal

LD2512162995 Kuwait KUNA in Arabic 1427 GMT 25 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Doha, 25 Dec — Muhammad Taha Tawakul, Eritrea's information commissioner to the Gulf states [name and title as received], has stressed that his country rejects the bilateral solution proposed by Yemen on the issue of the Hanish islands, which are an issue of dispute between the two countries.

In statements to the Kuwaiti News Agency KUNA, Tawakul, who is stationed in Doha [Qatar's capital], has said that the Eritrean Government feels there is no point attending bilateral negotiations as several [rounds of] similar negotiations did not succeed in solving the dispute. He has demanded that the dispute be solved within the framework of negotiations between the two sides in the presence of neutral observers.

In this respect he has welcomed the Ethiopian and Egyptian efforts, in addition to the American efforts. Tawakul has reiterated his country's stance, which calls for putting the problem forward to the International Court of Justice in case a solution is not reached.

Tawakul has pointed out that he met a Qatari Foreign Ministry official last Saturday and conveyed to him the Eritrean Government's view of the crisis with Yemen. He had also conveyed to the Qatari official the Eritrean Government's resentment of the Qatari stance of supporting Yemen in the issue.

Yemen had sent convoys to a number of Arab states to deliver messages from President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih to their presidents and to inform them of the latest developments in the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute.

Ethiopia's Mesfin Arrives on 2d Visit to Asmara

LD2512205095 Asmara Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea in Tigrigna 1600 GMT 25 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Ethiopian Foreign Minister Mr. Seyoum Mesfin this afternoon arrived in Asmara with a second message from the prime minister, Mr. Meles Zenawi, to President Isaias Afwerki on finding a solution to the current conflict between Eritrea and Yemen. Referring to the issue of the Hanish archipelago, Mr. Seyoum said the two parties had reached an accord on some major issues, but if the bilateral dialogue failed, the issue should be taken to the international court of justice immediately for final settlement.

President Isaias reaffirmed to the Ethiopian Foreign Minister that Eritrea's stand on the Hanish archipelago included: the need for international arbitration; that both sides must vacate the islands; that POWs be handed over to the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross] unconditionally; and that mutual understanding rather than threats was relevant.

In conclusion, Mr. Seyoum Mesfin said one of the most contentious issues on both sides is that of who should keep away from where. This issue remains outstanding and efforts are under way to resolve it. Mr Seyoum Mesfin arrived in Asmara after delivering a similar message in Yemen.

Radio Commentary Urges Dialogue With Yemen

EA2312184095 Asmara Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea in Tigrinya 0400 GMT 23 Dec 95

[Commentary entitled "Even Now the Solution Lies in Patience and Dialogue"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The main talk this week in Eritrea and its environs was the incident in the Hanish Archipelago. Some groups had been disseminating defamatory and baseless accusations against Eritrea. However, since these were old and rigid accusations, they had no influence and were not accepted at all. On the contrary, since the dispute between Eritrea and Yemen could bring about instability, various leaders of the Arab world, the organization of Muslim countries, the UN secretary general and the OAU secretary general expressed interest in solving the problem peacefuly, and urged both countries to comply with their call.

This is a positive step altogether and is an indication of goodwill. Actually, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, as a friend who relishes good ties between Eritrea and Yemen has taken the initiative of mediating and solving the unnecessary conflict which has erupted between the two fraternal countries. The Government of Eritrea supports wholeheartedly the initiative to solve the problem through peaceful dialogue.

When the incident broke out and when our Yemeni brothers deployed their forces on our land, even though they had committed a (?crime) against us, the Eritrean Government — taking into account the brotherly and strategic ties between the two countries — tried and continues to try to solve the problem through patience and dialogue. But what about our Yemeni brothers? In November 1995 they deployed their forces on the islands. They also refused to withdraw and hold talks.

When the Eritrean Government was making efforts to solve the problem through patience and dialogue, the Yemenis attacked our defense forces and continued to accuse and issue inflammatory and irresponsible statements against Eritrea.

The Eritrean Government, in line with the statement it issued on 19 December, wholeheartedly supports and

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accepts the initiative of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. It has also shown goodwill so that other concerned leaders may join the endeavor. By doing so, it has reaffirmed its readiness to solve the dispute peacefully and through international arbitration. So we would like to send our best wishes and a message to our Yemeni brothers that a lasting solution can only be achieved by following the path of peace and dialogue and not by intimidation, threats, setting preconditions and force. And of course, mistakes cannot be corrected by making other mistakes.

Neutral Observers Sought for Troop Withdrawal

NC2612130595 Paris AFP in English 1138 GMT 26 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Asmara, Dec 26 (AFP) — Eritrea has proposed international observers oversee the withdrawal of its troops and Yemeni soldiers from a disputed Red Sea island, a government official said Tuesday [26 December].

Girma Asmeron, in charge of the Foreign Ministry's Africa department, said the deployment of international observers was raised when President Isaias Afwerki held talks with Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin, who is mediating between Eritrea and Yemen.

"We're suggesting the names of United States, France, Ethiopia and Egypt to create an international, neutral body that could go there and monitor the withdrawal," Asmeron said.

Eritrean forces on December 18 seized control of the volcanic island of Hanish al-Kabir after a three-day battle, in which Yemen lost three soldiers and Eritrea nine. Eritrean soldiers have taken 195 Yemeni soldiers prisoner.

The island, which is part of an archipelago formerly in Ottoman possession and whose status has never been defined under international convention, controls access to the Bab el-Mandeb straits between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

An Ethiopian embassy official, who asked not to be named, said Tuesday that the Eritreans "have the suspicion that if they withdraw unilaterally, Yemen wouldn't."

Seyoum on Tuesday left for the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa following his second round of shuttle diplomacy between Asmara and Sanaa.

Asmeron stated that the detained Yemeni troops would be handed over swiftly and unconditionally to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which dispatched envoy Jean-Francois Sangsue from Addis Ababa to Asmara on Saturday.

"The ICRC can have the prisoners as soon as they're ready to take them. It's only a logistical question, a matter of days," Asmeron said.

"We suggested international observers, suggested names, now it's up to Yemen to respond," he added. "We want this matter to be settled in a peaceful way, through the ICJ (the International Court of Justice in The Hague). And until then we should all get out."

A planned visit to Asmara next Sunday by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali could facilitate the creation of an observer force, Asmeron said.

Ethiopia

Mesfin Proposes Peacekeeping Force for Islands

EA2212152095 Addis Ababa Radio Ethiopia Network in Amharic 1000 GMT 22 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Ethiopia has proposed that Eritrea and Yemen should withdraw their military forces from the disputed Hanish archipelago until a lasting solution to the problem is found through peaceful means.

According to Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin, who returned to Addis Ababa on 21 December after delivering a message from Prime Minister Meles Zenawi to the Yemeni and Eritrean presidents, Ethiopia proposes that until there is a lasting solution to the problem of the archipelago a force with components from both countries concerned and third parties which are acceptable to both countries should for the time being keep the peace there.

Prime Minister Meles's message asks for the problem to be resolved peacefully through dialogue, and if this cannot be achieved, then a solution should be sought at the International Court of Justice.

The prime minister went on to say, in his message, that the governments of the two countries should be ready to accept the decisions of the International Court of Justice. In addition, he urged the two countries to desist from actions that would further mar their relations.

Official Demands Sudan Extradite Mubarak Attackers

NC2412220595 Cairo MENA in Arabic 2110 GMT 24 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 24 Dec (MENA) — Ethiopian Vice Foreign Minister Takida Alimo [as transliterated] has stressed that the attack on President Husni Mubarak in Addis Ababa constitutes aggression against Ethiopia and indirect aggression against Egypt

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and an attempt to harm the OAU. In a statement to the newspaper AL-AKHBAR published on Monday, he says that his country will not cover up Sudan's crime of supporting terrorism and planning the Addis Ababa incident.

The Ethiopian official said that he reviewed with the Security Council members the available evidence, which confirms Sudan's complicity. He noted that he requested that this issue be placed on the agenda of the Security Council to force Sudan to hand over to Ethiopia the three defendants who are residing on its territory. He called on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility regarding the state terrorism sponsored by the Sudanese government and to pressure Khartoum to hand over the three defendants.

Somalia

Somaliland 'Regrets' Red Sea Island Conflict

EA2212192795 Hargeysa Radio Hargeysa Voice of the Republic of Somaliland in Somali 1200 GMT 18 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The council of ministers of the republic of Somaliland on 18 December discussed the crisis between Eritrea and Yemen and the need for the government of Somaliland to declare its stance regarding the matter. The council of ministers has therefore issued the following declaration:

The Republic of Somaliland regrets the outbreak of conflict between the two brotherly and neighboring countries of Eritrea and Yemen. Surely, the horn of Africa and the Red Sea do not need any more military conflicts and the resultant problems, given the fact that the problems brought about by previous wars are still outstanding. The international community is growing weary and turning its back on them. Any further war and problems can only worsen the already volatile region and the Red Sea.

The government of the republic of Somaliland therefore appeals to IGADD [Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development] and the Arab League member countries to immediately make it their duty to mediate between the two conflicting countries. Eritrea and Yemen are also called upon to agree to an end to the conflict through dialogue and mediation.

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Mandela Delivers Christmas Message to Nation

MB2412190695 Johannesburg SABC TV 1 Network in English 1758 GMT 24 Dec 95

[Christmas message read by President Nelson Mandela; place and date not given — recorded]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Just as this period of good will is the time to thank the Lord for the blessings on our nation in this past year, it is also a moment of deserved relaxation with our loved ones, especially the children. It is a time for sharing. [Johannesburg SAPA PR Wire Service in English at 1329 GMT on 24 December transmits a version of the Mandela message, embargoed until 1746 GMT, that begins with the opening line: "I am delighted to speak to all South Africans on this Christmas day." The SAPA version is otherwise identical to the SABC TV recorded version.]

As we enjoy this great moment, we should also remember the children who do not enjoy the care of parents or loved ones. There are many citizens, too, who cannot fend for themselves, confined in hospital, or disadvantaged in many other ways. Let us show them compassion during this period and beyond.

Each one of us should draw pride from our efforts to bring sunshine into the hearts of others. Let this Christmas period be the time for us to renew our commitment to work together as one nation, to build a better life for all South Africans.

I send a message of love and peace to all fellow citizens, and our friends across the globe. Let us embrace one another, and build on the spirit of reconciliation that has become the hallmark of our rainbow nation.

As we rejoice in the wonderful year we were blessed with, let us pray to be peacemakers and builders of a harmonious nation. Let peace reside on all our hearts.

Spends Day in Transkei

MB2512203295 Johannesburg SABC TV 1 Network in Afrikaans 1800 GMT 25 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] President Nelson Mandela spent Christmas Day at his vacation home in Qunu, in the Transkei, where he arranged a special Christmas Day feast for hundreds of residents. Danie Hefers reports:

[Begin recording] [Hefers] The president left his vacation home early this morning for a long walk in thick mist in the hilly area. For the 77-year-old president, this was a time to reminisce about his childhood days in the region. President Mandela spent three hours walking the muddy footpaths in the region where he spent his childhood, talking patiently to residents. Hundreds of local residents arrived for a special Christmas meal prepared in a tent outside the president's house. According to President Mandela, he wanted to bring temporary respite to residents in one of the country's poorest areas.

[Mandela, in English] We have made preparations at home to entertain as many people in these surrounding villages as possible. But it's a forlorn attempt, because you entertain them for that day and, of course, for the next day — they come back the next day, the same crowd — and that's the end of it. And they go back to their squalor, their misery, and you feel really moved deeply moved. You have to see the way in which people live to really understand the evil of racial oppression in this country. [end recording]

ANC Secretary General Issues Christmas Message

MB2312161795 Johannesburg SAPA in English 0857 GMT 23 Dec 95

["Christmas message" issued by ANC Secretary General Cyril Ramaphosa on 23 December on the SAPA PR Wire Service]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] We are now approaching the end of what has been a very important year. It is during this year that we observed the first anniversary of the birth of our new democracy — an occasion marked by both celebration and reflection.

1995 was no less significant a year for all our people. It gives us a glimpse of what the future holds in store. This year's achievements have provided us with insight into the opportunities that await South Africa in the coming years. It has at the same time given us a better understanding of the magnitude of the task of reconstruction and development that still lie ahead.

The African National Congress has always admitted that no major transformation process can ever succeed without the solid support of the majority of our people in their organised formations and sectors. We shall continue to ensure the constructive involvement of all these in the Reconstruction and Development Programme [RDP].

For indeed without their involvement the Reconstruction and Development Programme will lack the mass content critical to its realization.

The single issue uppermost in people's minds, which will continue to impede the effective implementation of the RDP, and generates a negative perception of our country in the outside world — is that of crime. Antisocial behaviour — be it murder, both political and criminal; car-hijackings; rape; robbery; child molestation; or some other — must be seriously addressed and eliminated. The sheer size of the problem dictates that

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piece-meal methods will be ineffective. It requires a comprehensive national strategy for the prevention of crime. At the core of such an approach is addressing the root causes of crime.

The ANC, in government and outside government, remains firmly committed to creating a safe and secure environment in which families can bring up their children; mothers can feel safe in their homes and on the streets; and breadwinners can go about their business without fear.

The government of national unity has already set in motion a national crime prevention strategy, linked to the community safety plan initiated by President Nelson Mandela. These and other initiatives must continue to draw the unequivocal support of all our communities if we are to uproot.

On the economic front, we draw inspiration from the economic growth and development hitherto unknown in our country in the past twenty-three years. The economy is now geared towards servicing the needs, not of a section but all our people.

The Constitution is being shaped by the need to move from the inequities of the past and towards a climate of peace, reconciliation and nation-building — issues so close to our president's heart.

Our country, has effectively been transformed from a pariah to a darling of nations of the world. We have now taken our rightful place in all international platforms: socially, economically, sporting, cultural, diplomatic and in all other forms of international relations.

The African National Congress, extends its heartfelt congratulations to all South Africans who helped shape the destiny of our country into the envy of the world. In this season of goodwill we express our condolences to those who lost their loved ones throughout this year.

The ANC extends a message of peace and harmony, a happy Christmas and prosperous new year!

Hundreds of Armed Men Attack KwaZulu Settlement

MB2512144395 Johannesburg SAPA in English 1426 GMT 25 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] PORT SHEPSTONE Dec 25 SAPA — At least nine people were murdered and six wounded in an early morning attack in Izingolweni along the KwaZulu/Natal South Coast on Monday [25 December] morning.

Police said a group of at least 600 armed men swept through the Shoba Shobane area at about 8am, setting houses alight and attacking residents. At least 70 homes were torched.

Security force members intervened and the men fled. No-one has been arrested in connection with the killing. Police were still searching the scene on Monday afternoon.

Police Blame ANC-Inkatha Conflict

MB2512190095 Johannesburg SAPA in English 1842 GMT 25 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] PORT SHEPSTONE Dec 25 SAPA — At least eleven people were murdered and eight wounded in an early morning attack in Izingolweni along the KwaZulu/Natal South Coast on Monday morning.

Police said a group of at least 600 armed men swept through the Shoba Shobane area at about 8am, setting houses alight and attacking residents. At least 70 homes were torched. [passage omitted]

The area is an African National Congress stronghold and police suspect the attack might be part of the ongoing conflict between ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party supporters.

ANC spokesman Dumisani Makhaye claimed violence in the province had increased since Premier Dr Frank Mdlalose took over the safety and security portfolio. Mdlalose denied the allegation.

Ten More Killed in Faction Fighting 26 Dec

MB2612161095 Johannesburg SAPA in English 1444 GMT 26 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] DURBAN Dec 26 SAPA — Ten people were killed in an attack at Goba in KwaZulu/Natal early on Tuesday [26 December] morning, police said. Thirty houses were set alight in the overnight attack which was apparently related to faction fighting in the area.

KwaZulu ANC, IFP Accuse Each Other of Killings

MB2212201795 Johannesburg SABC TV 1 Network in Afrikaans 1800 GMT 22 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Sixteen men, including a Defense Force member, were arrested in the KwaZulu/Natal Midlands for possession of illegal firearms. The arrests near Impendle come in the wake of the murder of an IFP [Inkatha Freedom Party] member. Later today the ANC said gasoline bombs were hurled at the house of one of its leaders, (Nomas Mdlozini). She was allegedly fired at with AK-47s and G-3 rifles but warded

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off the attack by returning fire with her own pistol. (Mdlozini) was unhurt. The ANC's Dumisani Makhaya said the identity documents of the IFP's Bulelani Xolo and a can of gasoline were found on the scene.

[Begin Makhaya recording in English] I have the fear that these attacks against ANC members in the south coast are conducted by leading IFP members. We hope the police this time will not have an excuse of not arresting such culprits. [end recording]

IFP Secretary General Ziba Jiyane said in turn that today's arrests prove that Defense Force members are involved in murdering IFP members.

[Begin Jiyane recording in progress in English] ... we were alerted to a Memela house in Mpendle which was filled with possible hit squad members, and when they went there, they were attacked, and they returned fire and they arrested 16 persons who are members of the ANC, and one of them is a soldier, who is a Mr. Khumbulani Zuma, who is from Mtubatuba of the 121 Battalion. [end recording]

Buthelezi: 'Highly Planned Pogrom' Against IFP

MB2312170595 Johannesburg SAPA in English 1352 GMT 23 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Durban Dec 23 SAPA — Inkatha Freedom Party [IFP] leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi on Saturday [23 December] accused church leaders of treating IFP deaths with disdain and of providing no pastoral care to bereaved families. He made his comments at Paddock on the KwaZulu-Natal south coast at the funeral of ten IFP members shot dead in two separate incidents on December 15. About 150 highly emotional mourners attended the funeral. One bereaved woman collapsed at the graveside.

In a speech prepared for delivery at the funeral, Buthelezi said that "nothing less than a systematic and highly planned pogrom" was being waged against the IFP and its leaders. "Since 1985 we have had over 400 of our leaders assassinated by hit squads. Yet despite a conviction rate of only some three percent, we are told that no more can be done to prosecute assailants."

There was an attempt to sweep IFP deaths under the carpet, he said. "We will no longer accept subjective and selective justice where an IFP life is worth nothing and where the assailants are too often the investigators," Buthelezi said.

Mainline church leaders rarely put in an appearance at the funerals of IFP members. "Why this selective morality, even on the part of the church? We as the IFP receive no pastoral care, even from churches," Buthelezi said.

Another funeral, of eight women and children killed on Tuesday night, also took place on Saturday at Mvutshiti near Margate. The eight were part of an ANC-aligned community.

Investigation Ordered Into Cabinet Notes Embargo

MB2412204995 Johannesburg SABC CCV Television Network in Zulu 1700 GMT 23 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] ANC spokesman Carl Niehaus has appealed for an extensive investigation into the allegation that Deputy President F.W. de Klerk extended the embargo on cabinet minutes days before the general elections in 1994. A report in the SUNDAY TIMES today has revealed that De Klerk extended the embargo on cabinet minutes by an additional 10 years.

The National Party [NP] says there is no cover up by De Klerk on the extension of the embargo. NP spokesman Fanus Schoeman has said it is normal practice by governments worldwide to have laws that regulate availability of records containing confidential cabinet discussions.

Nzo on Exclusion From Commonwealth Nigeria Team

MB2212175295 Johannesburg THE STAR in English 22 Dec 95 p 6

[Report by Alan Robinson in London]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] South Africa will continue to play a prominent role in the Commonwealth bid to put Nigeria back on the path to democracy. But all official efforts will be channelled through a special five-man mission to Lagos.

This assurance was given by Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo at a media briefing yesterday following a two-day meeting in London of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on serious or persistent violations of the principles of the Harare Declaration.

Nzo denied there was any snub in South Africa's exclusion from the special Nigerian mission, and said the membership — Zimbabwe, New Zealand, Ghana, Jamaica and Malaysia — was finely balanced and tactically chosen.

He agreed that there had been differences of opinion during the London summit. It is understood that New Zealand and Canada pressed strongly for the toughest action against Lagos, including an oil boycott, while Ghana, which has close links with Nigeria, cautioned against a hard line to bring the regime to heel.

South Africa has clearly decided to curtail its earlier bilateral efforts to bring change in Nigeria in favour

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of a concerted Commonwealth campaign to restore democracy.

Nzo said: "Perhaps too much emphasis had been placed on what South Africa should do and this may have begun to harm perceptions in Nigeria. That is why we (the meeting) wanted a collective decision and collective action."

The Commonwealth committee warned Nigeria that although the meeting had not set out to draw up a list off punitive actions, if dialogue failed, further steps could be taken on an incremental basis.

These included:

— A freeze on financial assets and bank accounts in foreign countries of members of the Nigerian regime, their families and collaborators.

— Action to prevent new investment, including bank loans.

— Action against export credits.

— A ban on the export of support equipment for the oil industry.

— Partial trade embargoes, for instance oil sanctions.

Discusses Response to Nigeria

MB2212160695 London BBC World Service in English 0530 GMT 22 Dec 95

[Interview with Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo by correspondent Veronique Edwards in London; date not given — from the "Network Africa" program]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] South Africa's foreign minister, Alfred Nzo, is currently in London for a Commonwealth special conference on democracy. Nigeria is at the top of that agenda. South Africa has been in the firing line over Nigeria, with many observers saying that while Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogonis were on death row, South Africa and Nelson Mandela failed to take firm enough stand over their plight by opting for dialogue with Nigeria. Well, our very own Veronique Edwards sought out Mr. Nzo in London and began by asking him if he agreed that South Africa has been caught napping over Nigeria.

[Begin recording] [Nzo] No, it would be absolutely wrong. We were not caught napping at all. The initiatives that we took were designed to assist Nigeria to come back to the democratic path. We still believed that dialogue would resolve and bring about the kind of situation that would benefit the Nigerian people and, therefore, Africa as a whole. But when it appeared, through the action that they took, that all these pleadings were falling on deaf ears, then it became necessary that something else ought to be done because, I mean, gross violation of human rights, I mean, people being executed is not nice at all and incidentally, virtually everybody in that Commonwealth felt enraged by what had happened in Nigeria. So that, it was not a South Africa-Nigeria problem, but the problem of everybody who subscribes to democracy and human rights.

[Edwards] Now, let us come to you personally. Now, you are very outspoken and very, I would say, vivacious person, but the press describes you as a boring person. Do you think they are right to think you are a boring person?

[Nzo] [laughs] I don't know. Now, you see, that one, you see, my dear, you have got to tell me if I am, but I can't say that I am boring. I mean, you have got to tell me. It is your own judgment, which can either be correct or wrong.

[Edwards] I don't find you boring but that is what...

[Nzo, interrupts] Thank you. I am so happy to hear that. [laughter]

[Edwards] Is it because you just want to keep a low profile?

[Nzo] Well, I don't know about that. You see, now, again it goes according to how people view you. Personally, I have never thought that I should (?shoulder) everybody aside, no. I don't think that is the way to do it, but I would rather be boring than be seen to be riding roughshod over people.

[Edwards] Before you get out of your chair, do you have any regrets?

[Nzo] No, no regrets at all. Absolutely no regrets, and I think it is a very fulfilling task that I have been given. I can't regret it, because, you see, especially, as it concerns the reestablishment of South Africa in the international community, it is a very pleasant task indeed. [end recording]

Government Team To Examine Russian Space Offer

MB2212141795 Johannesburg SAPA in English 1316 GMT 22 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] CAPE TOWN Dec 22 SAPA — Count-down for South Africa's first space mission began this week when the government decided to set up a team of experts to look at details of Russia's offer of a place on a flight to Mir space station.

It was also learnt this week South Africa could be asked to pay millions of rands [R] for sharing the flight and for the chance to conduct scientific experiments on Mir.

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The decision to establish a technical team was taken on Thursday at a meeting between Science and Technology Minister Ben Ngubane and Deputy President Thabo Mbeki.

Spokesmen for the two were unwilling to give details of the decision or to comment on the possible costs of the mission. "There is nothing substantial we can communicate at this stage," said Ngubane's spokesman Frans Basson, adding however the "idea of the flight" was "definitely on". One of the briefs of the committee would be to look into costs.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets made the offer to Mbeki last month during a visit to South Africa. Mbeki said at the time he had accepted the offer and South Africa would be the first African country to have a cosmonaut in space.

Chief expert in the Russian Space Agency's Department of International Co-operation, Victor Nikolayev, said from Moscow this week Russia was very keen for South African participation. South Africa had highly developed technologies and its status in Africa meant the mission would also have political advantages for Russia. "So it will be an opportunity maybe to construct something together, because our traditional partners are Europe and the United States of America," he said.

South Africa would however be expected to contribute to the costs of the flight. The amount would depend on negotiations, but could be between R43 and R90 million. South Africa would be able to draw up a list of experiments it wanted to conduct at Mir and could either send up its own equipment or use that already on the orbiting space station.

Most common experiments involved life sciences, Nikolayev said. These included space medicine and space biology. He said once a detailed agreement had been signed, South Africa would be expected to send a group of candidates to Moscow for stringent medical tests. Two of them, one a back-up, would be chosen for training for the mission which would include Russian language lessons and take at least a year.

Although the cosmonaut need not necessarily be male, having a female on board complicated life support systems — such as toilet arrangements. The type of person chosen would depend on the tasks he or she had to do. If these included complex scientific programmes, involving many devices, it was better to send an engineer. However the first Soviet cosmonauts had been military pilots chosen for their good health and ability to handle the stress of the flight. As part of their preparations the cosmonauts would be trained to make decisions and perform tasks while being subjected to massive acceleration. They would also receive survival training in case their returning capsule landed in a remote area or the ocean.

The time of the mission would depend on negotiations, but could be from just over a week to three or four months.

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Nigeria

Abacha Delivers Christmas-New Year's Message

LD2512111295 Kaduna Radio Nigeria in English 0500 GMT 25 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The head of state, General Sani Abacha, has urged Christians in the country to put into practice the ideals of sacrifice, selflessness, and love which Christmas represents. In a Christmas and New Year message to the nation, Gen. Abacha stressed the need for Nigerians to promote these attributes to ensure that they live together in (?God and harmony). He urged Nigerians to eschew threats detrimental to peaceful coexistence and to show greater affection and sympathy toward one another. The head of state also stressed the need for the people to show greater dedication to the worship of God and prosperity of mankind. Gen. Abacha pledged that the government would continue to take steps to create a conducive atmosphere in which the people would feel a sense of belonging, but said that individuals had a more vital role to play in cementing the social bonds through religious tolerance. The head of state prayed that the spirit of Christmas would help Nigerians to continue to live together and build bridges of love and understanding for the peace and progress of the nation.

Text of Formal Protest to Commonwealth Released

AB2212192595 London BBC World Service in English 1705 GMT 22 Dec 95

[From the "Focus on Africa" program]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Nigerian Government is apparently feeling rather put upon by the Commonwealth. This week, the main ministerial action group on the Harare Declaration met in London to discuss countries that were not matching up to the democracy requirements. Top of the list was Nigeria, which has already been suspended from the Commonwealth. The action group decided to send a special team to Nigeria to talk about the timetable for democracy, which the Abacha military regime had set at three years, and to discuss the whole thing again in April. Well now, there has been a reaction in Nigeria with the publication of a formal letter about its suspension. From Lagos, Sola Odunfa reports:

[Begin Odunfa recording] Nigeria's formal protest letter against its suspension was sent to the Commonwealth secretary general two weeks ago, but the text was released in Abuja today following the publication of the conclusions of the London meeting of the eight-member Commonwealth ministerial action group.

The Nigerian Government took strong objection to its being singled out for sanctions over the provisions of the Commonwealth's Harare Declaration on Human Rights. It pointed out that the declaration was meant to cover all Commonwealth countries and not Nigeria alone. It was common knowledge, it said, that a number of Commonwealth countries were affected in varying degrees by problems of human rights, democratization, and good governance, and these concrete cases should also have been discussed at the Auckland summit.

Nigeria said that it welcomed the establishment of the ministerial committee as being helpful to the promotion of the ideals of the Harare Declaration, but, it said, that for the monitoring to be fair and democratic it should be carried out in every Commonwealth country, each being taken in alphabetical order.

Nigeria rejected the two-year deadline given by the Commonwealth for the return to democratic rule. The government said that the Commonwealth had no authority either to dictate to any member state the period of its transition from military to civilian rule or to impose sanctions for perceived lapses in any country's judicial system.

The letter, which was signed by foreign affairs minister, Chief Tom Ikimi, restated Nigeria's view that the sanctions imposed at the Commonwealth summit were uncalled for and unjust and they should be rescinded. [end recording]

Official Seeks 'Further Support' for Transition

AB2212172795 Lagos Radio Nigeria Network in English 1500 GMT 22 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The minister of information and culture, Dr. Walter Ofonagoro, has called for further support from Nigerians for a successful implementation of the transition to civil rule program. Dr. Ofonagoro made the appeal yesterday at the end-of-year dinner for media chief executives in Lagos. He said the successful implementation of the program would lead to the enthronement of an enduring democracy in the country.

The minister commended Nigerians for refusing to be incited by a section of the international community to engage in lawlessness. He stated that this year had been rewarding for the country despite the prevailing social and political situation. Dr. Ofonagoro listed the conclusion of the proceedings of the constitutional conference, the announcement of the civil rule program, and the establishment of transition committees as some of the achievements made during the year. He asked the mass media to explain clearly to Nigeria the damage

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done to the country by some Nigerians campaigning against the nation.

More Committees Formed Under Transition Program

AB2212172495 Lagos Radio Nigeria Network in English 1500 GMT 22 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Three more bodies have been set up under the transition to civil rule program. These are the Federal Character Commission, the Committee on National Reconciliation, and the Committee on Devolution of Powers between the federal, state, and local governments.

The Federal Character Commission has 32 members, with Alhaji Adamu Fika as chairman. The Committee on National Reconciliation has Chief Ernest Akinyele as chairman, with 13 members, while Alhaji Abdurahman Okene is the chairman of the Committee on Devolution of Powers which also has 13 members.

A government statement in Abuja says the committee on the Federal Character Commission will be inaugurated on Wednesday [27 December] next week in Abuja at noon. The inauguration of the National Reconciliation Committee is scheduled for Thursday, also at noon, while that of the Committee on Devolution of Powers will be on Friday at the same time. [passage omitted]

Security Police Arrest Magazine Editor in Chief

MB2412190895 London BBC World Service in English 1740 GMT 24 Dec 95

[From the "African News" program]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A prominent Nigerian weekly magazine, TELL, says its editor in chief has been detained by security police. A statement by the company said the editor, Nosa Igiebor, was arrested by six members of the security services at his home yesterday and was taken to security headquarters on the outskirts of Lagos. The authorities also confiscated all copies of the latest edition of the magazine, which is strongly critical of the military government.

Last week's edition was also confiscated, with several employees being held and questioned before being released. (?The owner) of TELL magazine, human rights activist (Gani Sower Hinmi), said he would mount a challenge in court this week to the arrest of Mr. Igiebor and seizure of the magazines, which he described as illegal and an act of intolerance.

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